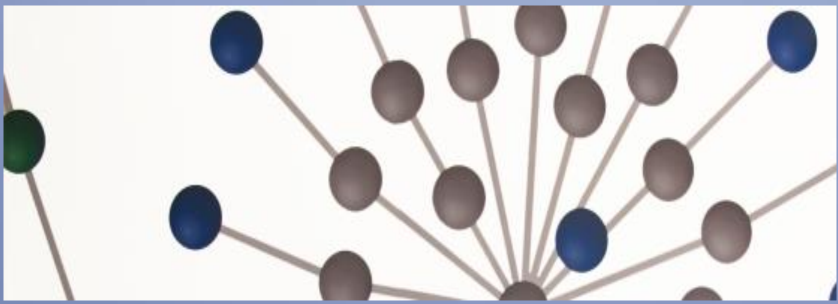


‘Feeling Better Connected’: Academics’ Use of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This report outlines findings from an international online survey of 711 academics about their use of social media as part of their work conducted in January 2014. The survey sought to identify the tools that the respondents used, those they found most useful and the benefits and the drawbacks of using social media as a university faculty member or postgraduate student. The results offer insights into the sophisticated and strategic ways in which some academics are using social media and the many benefits they have experienced for their academic work. These benefits included connecting and establishing networks not only with other academics but also people or groups outside universities, promoting openness and sharing of information, publicising and development of research and giving and receiving support. While the majority of the respondents were very positive about using social media, they also expressed a range of concerns. These included issues of privacy and the blurring of boundaries between personal and professional use, the risk of jeopardising their career through injudicious use of social media, lack of credibility, the quality of the content they posted, time pressures, social media use becoming an obligation, becoming a target of attack, too much self-promotion by others, possible plagiarism of their ideas and the commercialisation of content and copyright issues. The report ends by contextualising the findings within the broader social and political environment and outlining areas for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Universities have begun to incorporate a diverse array of digital technologies across their teaching, research and public relations activities. This incorporation of digital technologies has begun to attract discussion in a range of forums. More specifically, calls for academics to use social media tools and platforms have emerged in the past few years. Several accounts on blogs and websites such as the LSE Impact of the Social Sciences (2014) have been published on the benefits and possibilities of using social media as part of academic work (for collections of relevant material see Carrigan 2014, Miah 2014)[1]. Some academic publications on how academics can use social media have also begun to appear (Bik and Goldstein 2013, Goodier and Czerniewicz 2012, Minocha and Petres 2013, Veletsianos and Kimmons 2012). Martin Weller (2011), an academic specialising in educational technology, introduced the concept of 'the digital scholar' in detail in his book bearing this title, with the subtitle 'How technology is transforming scholarly practice'. At least one handbook has been published on the subject, entitled *Social Media for Academics: A Practical Guide* (Neal 2012).

Thus far only a minority of academics have taken up the use of social media tools and platforms as a regular part of their professional work. This number appears to be slowly growing as moves towards making research data and publications and teaching materials available outside the academy, and for academics to engage with the wider public, have become more dominant in higher education. Regular surveys using representative samples of American faculty members conducted by the educational publishing company Pearson continue to find that their respondents use social media far more in their personal lives than for professional purposes. However their latest report notes that the professional use of social media has increased since their surveying began in 2009. More than half (55 per cent) of their respondents said that they used social media for professional purposes other than teaching at least monthly, but only 41 per cent did so for teaching purposes (Seaman and Tinti-Kane 2013: 7). LinkedIn was the most used site for professional purposes other than teaching, followed by blogs and wikis, Facebook, podcasts and Twitter (2013: 11). For teaching purposes, blogs and wikis are most used, followed by podcasts, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (2013: 14).

In terms of academic studies, the practice of blogging, which pre-dates the emergence of social media, has been most often written about. It has been observed by several writers that in the early years of academic blogging there was often suspicion of the practice on the part of other academics. People who maintained blogs were in some cases discriminated against when seeking tenure or promotion or otherwise viewed with disdain for being self-aggrandising or wasting time (Gregg 2006, Kirkup 2010, Maitzen 2012). As the practice has become more common, however, and calls for

[1] I am one such commentator. I view myself as a 'participant observer' in relation to this research topic as I am an active user of social media as part of my academic work. I have presented workshops on social media for academia (Lupton 2013a) and written about my own experiences (see, for example, Lupton 2012, Lupton 2013b).

academics to engage with the public have intensified, blogging has become viewed more positively.

Some bloggers use their writing as a way of developing ideas and seeking engagement with others before they formalise their ideas into a more traditional academic piece (Adema 2013, Carrigan 2013, Daniels 2013, Estes 2012, Gregg 2006, Kjellberg 2010, Maitzen 2012). Academic blogging has been described as 'conversational scholarship', a means by which academics can attempt to loosen their formal style of writing as part of communicating to a wider audience (Gregg 2006). It has been argued that the practice encourages academics to think about their research and writing in new ways, bearing in mind the multiplicity of potential audiences and the ways readers can respond to the material presented (Kitchin 2014, Kitchin *et al.* 2013, Kjellberg 2010). The content of blog posts may be directly political, providing a forum for academics to challenge government policies and programs (Kitchin 2014, Kitchin *et al.* 2013, Wade and Sharp 2013). They can also provide an opportunity for academics to share their frustrations about higher education procedures and policies and their own experiences as academic workers (Adema 2013, Gregg 2006, 2009, Mewburn and Thomson 2013).

While there is now an established literature on academic blogging, we have little detailed knowledge about how academics are using the more recent social media tools and platforms, including not only those open to the general public, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and Google+ but specialised platforms designed for academics like Academia.edu, Mendeley, Zotero and ResearchGate. Initial research suggested reluctance on the part of academics to use platforms like Facebook either for personal or work reasons (Roblyer *et al.* 2010). A small number of studies on academic use of Twitter have been published. One researcher qualitatively analysed tweets from 45 scholars and found that they used Twitter to share resources, information and media with each other, discuss their teaching and students, request assistance from and offered advice to others, engage in social commentary, construct professional personae, network with others and highlight their participation in other online networks (Veletsianos 2012). Fransman's (2013) findings from a study on British academics' use of Twitter found that it was used by a less than a third of her sample group, and that those who did use it were using other digital media as well. She found that the non-users were largely ignorant of the value of Twitter for academic purposes or lacked proficiency and thus did not venture to try it.

More specifically, citation practices and their association with Twitter have received attention from some researchers. A small study of academics' citation practices on Twitter found that scholars often use this medium to cite articles and as part of a conversation about their content. The citation often occurs within a week of the article's publication: a much faster response than traditional academic citation practices (Priem and Costello 2010). One academic's investigation of the impact of tweeting about her own research found that doing so had a significant impact on how many views her published articles received (Terras 2012). Research investigating this aspect of academic tweeting has confirmed the positive effect on traditional citations (Eysenbach

2011, Shuai *et al.* 2012). The use of Twitter at conferences has also been researched, demonstrating that it operates as a multidirectional complex space involving intersecting conversations, questions, note-making, the sharing of resources and the establishment of an online presence for the tweeter and for the conference community (Ebner *et al.* 2009, Ross *et al.* 2011).

Other research suggests that there are many benefits to academics of using social media for their work. Veletsianos (2013) engaged in an auto-ethnography of his own social media use as a digital scholar and his observations of those other academics with whom he interacted on these media. He described the importance of the culture of sharing for participants, in which sharing is portrayed as a scholarly and education practice. Veletsianos notes that these new ways of academic practice (such as asking for help for references from colleagues on social media and circulating draft forms of manuscripts for comments) differ markedly from traditional approaches to academic scholarship. A semi-structured interview study carried out with academics from a number of different countries who were members of an information technology network found that unsurprisingly, given their field of research, they were frequent and varied users of social media for research (Gruzd *et al.* 2012). The top five most-used tools were wikis (including Wikipedia), general social media sites such as Facebook, listserv groups, blogs and video or teleconferencing tools. The most-often mentioned benefits of using social media for research were establishing new connections and strengthening existing ones, keeping up to date with topics in their field of research and promoting their own scholarly work.

Research has also revealed that digitised academics may experience struggles and tensions, particularly in relation to the time they used when engaging in these tools and platforms and their negotiation of professional and personal personae (Gruzd *et al.* 2012, Kirkup 2010, Veletsianos 2013, Veletsianos and Kimmons 2012, 2013). This may be particularly the case with Facebook, which is often used for both personal and professional reasons by academics, and thus presents a particular case for negotiating the boundaries between these two identities. Academics do not necessarily want to position themselves as their students' friends or equals or to engage in personal disclosures (Helvie-Mason 2011, Roblyer *et al.* 2010, Sturgeon and Walker 2009, Veletsianos and Kimmons 2013), practices that Facebook tends to encourage (Ellis 2010, Sauter 2013, van Dijck 2013).

Other challenges are related to the inability to control social media content and the necessity of monitoring various social media channels, resulting in information overload (Gruzd *et al.* 2012). A number of academics have been censured by their universities for what is viewed as inappropriate social media use or specific comments they have made or have been threatened with legal action (Gruzd *et al.* 2012). Academic reward systems have also been slow to acknowledge the work that academics devote to social media outputs (Graham 2013, Gruzd *et al.* 2011, Kirkup 2010).

The risks of public engagement for minority groups in academia need to be identified. Sexual harassment has been experienced by some female academics who have engaged in debates in public forums or who have used social media to

communicate their research findings (Beard 2013, Mitchell 2013). Non-white academics have also been subjected to racist comments, and female black academics have experienced both sexism and racism (Cottom McMillan 2012). Those academics who express their opinions on controversial issues, who identify as gay or who challenge powerful institutions or commercial interests are also often the target of comments questioning their professional integrity, as well hate messages and even death threats (*Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications Draft Report* 2013, Chapman 2012, Cottom McMillan 2012, Kitchin 2014, Kitchin *et al.* 2013, Wade and Sharp 2013). This is a wider problem of the affordances of online technologies: anyone who engages online is open to comments that cannot easily be removed from internet archives (Bossewitch and Sinnreich 2013).

New digital technologies offer great potential for sharing and disseminating academic scholarship far more widely and rapidly than ever before at the same time as allowing scope for greater transformation of these knowledges in ways of which the original authors may not anticipate or approve. Some writers have commented on the vulnerability that social media engagement and open access publication may engender in scholars who are used to formal academic writing styles and traditional procedures of publishing, in which one's writing is vetted by one's peers before it reaches an audience and people outside academic do not have the opportunity to comment on one's research (Estes 2012, Gregg 2006, Kirkup 2010, Kitchin *et al.* 2013, Maitzen 2012). Posting one's work on online media may also be considered a risky practice because of the loss of control that eventuates (Beer 2013b).

THE SURVEY

I decided to conduct my own online survey of academics' use of social media to provide a more recent overview. I used the commonly-used online survey tool SurveyMonkey to construct a brief questionnaire that included both fixed-choice questions and open-ended questions. The survey was opened on 1 January 2014 and closed after four weeks. I publicised it several times during this period, using variety of social media, including Twitter, Facebook pages, LinkedIn and listservs of which I was a member. My tweets publicising the survey received a high number of retweets, and although I cannot be sure how the respondents who completed the survey came across it, I would estimate that many did so via Twitter networks.

The respondents were asked to respond to two questions at the start of the survey: 'What social media do you currently use as part of your academic work?' and 'Which of these social media do you find most useful for your academic work?' The same list of social media was provided for both questions and respondents could tick as many as they liked for each question. They were also provided with the opportunity to write in other digital media for each question.

The remainder of the survey questions were open-ended, providing respondents with the opportunity to write in details of their experiences. In one question they were asked to explain what benefits they gained from the use of these tools for their work in

higher education. Another asked them to describe any concerns or worries they may have in relation to using social media. Finally they were given the opportunity to write in any other comments they wished to make about using social media as part of academic work.

My survey was non-representative, relying on volunteers who had heard about the survey through social media networks to choose to complete it rather than using probability sampling. Given this method of recruitment, is it highly likely that the academics who responded were more likely to use social media for professional purposes compared with the general population of academics and were more favourably disposed towards such use than a randomly-selected representative sample. My findings, therefore, are not generalisable to the population of academics as a whole. What they do suggest are some interesting insights into what academics find useful, interesting, challenging or confronting about using as part of their work in higher education, particularly the responses that were given to the open-ended questions.

Demographics

A total of 711 academics completed the survey, two-thirds of whom (67%) were women. In terms of geographical region, the largest response was from the UK (37%), followed by Australia/New Zealand (25%), the US (20%), continental Europe (10%) and Canada (6%). The remaining respondents were from Ireland, the Caribbean and countries in Africa, Asia and South America (see Figure 1). Most of the respondents were relatively junior in terms of their career stage: 34% were early career academics and 26% were postgraduate students. Mid-career academics comprised 24% of the respondents, while only 15% described themselves as senior academics and 1% as retired or emeritus academics (see Figure 2).

Almost half the respondents were from the social sciences (49%), while a further 18% were in medicine, public health or allied health areas, 18% in the humanities and 13% in science, technology and engineering. The remaining 2% were in the disciplines of education, commerce, the creative and performing arts, law, library science and archaeology, or described themselves as multidisciplinary (see Figure 3).

Figure 1

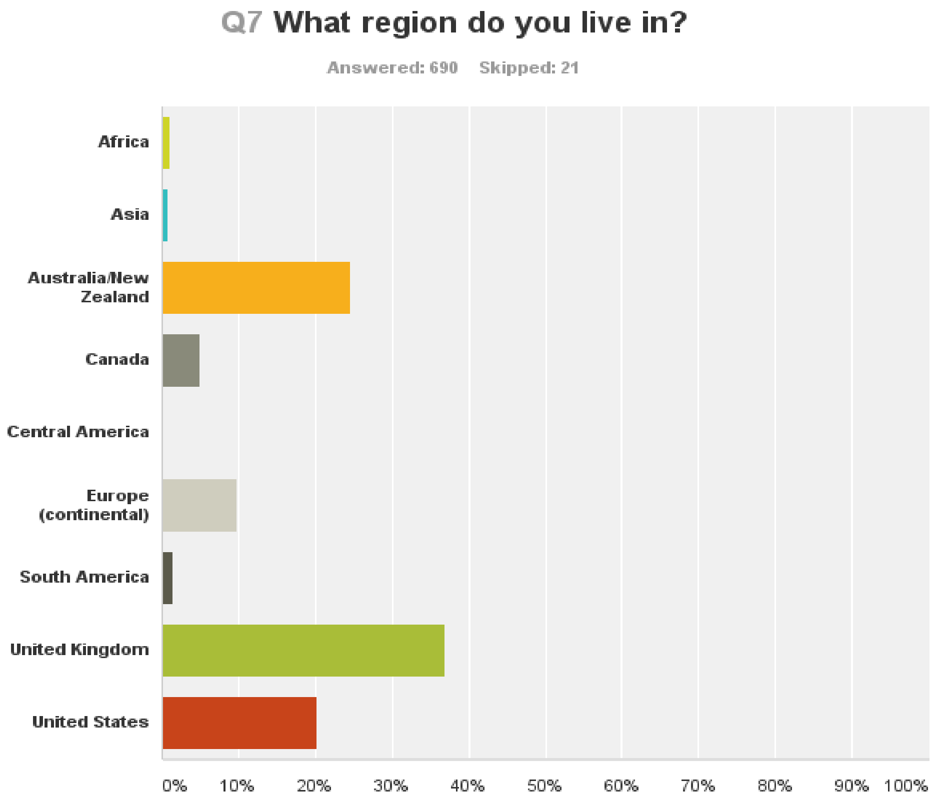


Figure 2

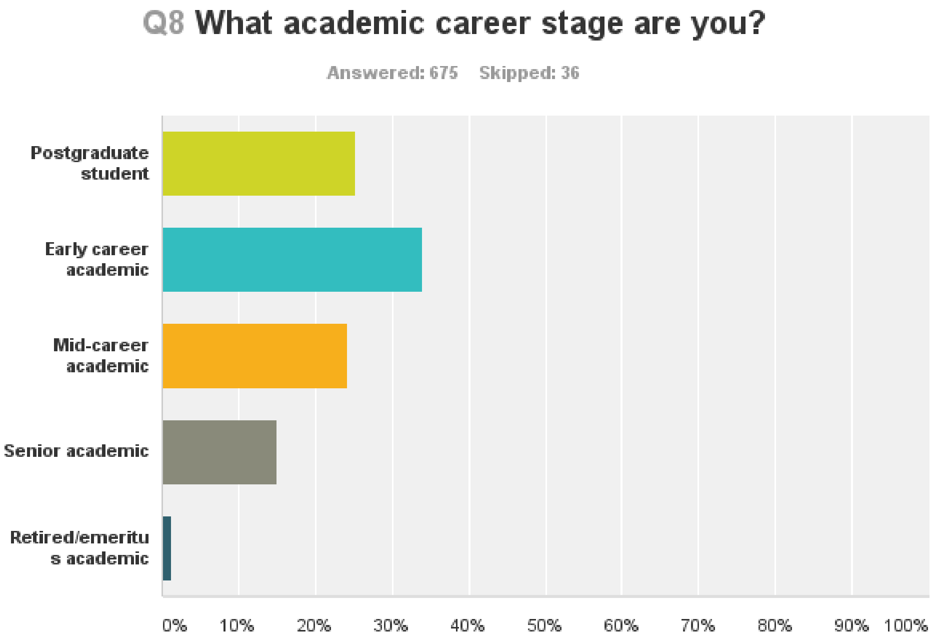
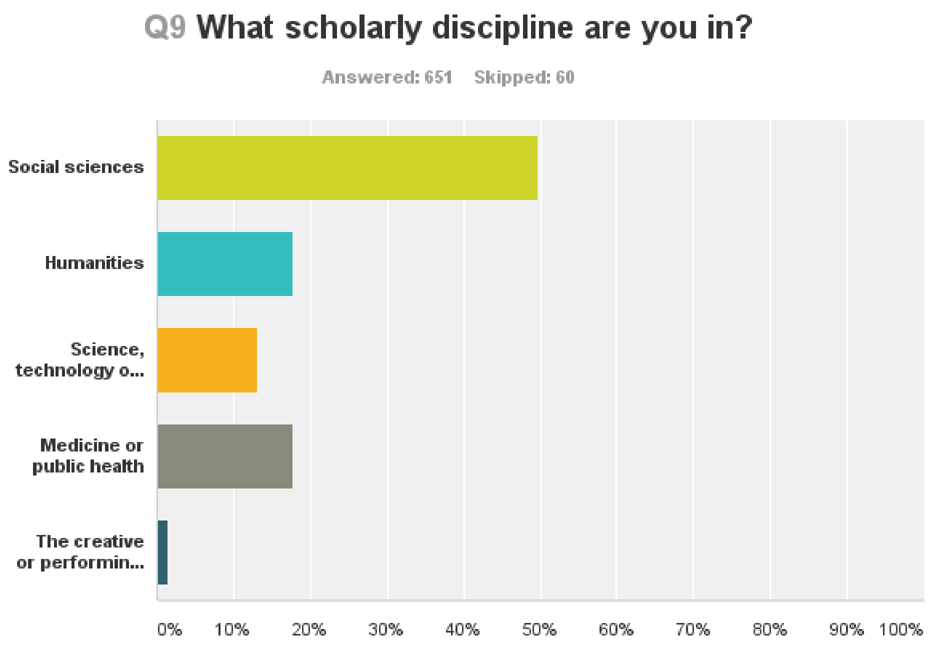


Figure 3



Social media use

Snapshots

To give a detailed idea of how academics are using social media, I provide a series of 'snapshots' below, followed by analysis across the responses given.

British female early career academic

Uses curation tools, SlideShare, YouTube, multi-authored blog, Academia.edu, Google+, Twitter, Facebook, Storify and About.me. Finds Twitter, multi-authored blog and SlideShare the most useful.

> *Benefits*: '[I use] Twitter - useful to follow people doing similar work, connect at conferences, enables me to discover articles, resources, organisations, ongoing projects. I use Twitter to tell others about ongoing work or resources and to have conversations, throw ideas around etc. I find interesting presentations on SlideShare, gives me ideas about content and is a way to follow work of people in a variety of fields. I blog as part of my work on a WordPress platform – it is an official department blog where multiple team members contribute. I find blogging great for slightly longer pieces about projects or activities (which I can then tweet link to) and I also follow quite a few blogs to keep up to date with work in other institutions or work of individuals. I use a Facebook group with

students to keep in touch, they respond quicker to questions posted there rather than direct email.'
Concerns: 'I do worry about making any flippant remarks that could be misinterpreted (or picked up by journalists with an agenda) so I try not to do that. However, I think the best Twitter accounts are characterised by people tweeting personal as well as work related things. Basically a social media identity that is authentic and reflects the whole life of a person. So I do tweet about social activities and non-work stuff. I have thought about making my account private but that does seem rather pointless for Twitter. I find some of the online academic disagreements I have come across quite scary and scathing and I hope I never end up in one of them.'

American male early career academic

Uses Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, personal blog, multi-authored blog, YouTube, SlideShare,Tumblr, Quora, referencing tools, Twitter. Finds Academia.edu, ResearchGate, personal blog and multi-authored blog to be the most useful.

Benefits: 'An opportunity to develop a routine of writing beyond simply reading others' work, and to generally practise writing and the art of communicating complex ideas to a general audience. For posts that are collectively or jointly authored, also gives experience in collaborative writing. an opportunity to sketch a research agenda at a very early stage, to indicate an area of inquiry I'm interested in or just starting to pursue. put ideas into wider circulation, to have an impact on social discourse and to hope that research matters in some respect beyond the journal's impact factor and the article's number of citations. to draw attention to our traditional publications to increase their exposure and make them more accessible to those outside our disciplines as part of the general movement away from locked-down, closed access academic journals, to promote and provide open access to ideas and publications.'
Concerns: 'Skepticism in academia about the value of academic blogging versus traditional publishing in academic journals. An academic needs to be aware of the metrics and values of their institution to ensure that social media isn't evaluated as being a negative.'

British female mid-career academic

Uses Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, personal blog, multi-authored blog, Pinterest and SlideShare. Finds Twitter the most useful.

Benefits: 'Twitter has helped me build real connections with other academics nationally and internationally, both in my subject area and across discipline boundaries. I have had questions answered in seconds. I have been asked to

submit papers to special issues of journals. I have been introduced to useful literature and blogs via tweeted links. I love the regular interaction with others. When I went to a conference in Sept I felt like I knew loads of people and their work already because of Twitter. It meant that conference conversation started before the event and continued long after it ended.'
Concerns: None.

European female postgraduate student

Uses Twitter, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, personal blog, SlideShare, referencing tool, Impact Story and Klout. Finds Twitter and ResearchGate the most useful.

Benefits: 'I get to know new publications that I wouldn't have found otherwise and I can be up-to-date with current research in my field. On ResearchGate, Academia and Twitter I get to see a "face behind the research", which helps to contextualize a researcher and his/her output (research and science is socialized). I can keep track of my (limited ;) impact, i.e. I see how many views, downloads and bookmarks my publications get and if some of my tweets are retweeted.'
Concerns: 'Some senior scientists at my university still consider social media as useless or a waste of time. It's not always easy to justify a social media presence and activity. Sometimes social media are distracting me. The lines between public/academic self and private self are blurring, although I try to separate them (Facebook for private communication; Twitter, Academia.edu, ResearchGate and SlideShare more for public/academic life).'

Overview

Not surprisingly, given the publicising of the survey using social media networks, the vast majority of the respondents (97%) said that they were currently using social media as part of their professional academic work. Given that the survey received a lot of publicity on Twitter, it is again unsurprising that 90% of the respondents noted that they used Twitter as part of their professional academic work, with 60% using LinkedIn, 49% Academia.edu, 42% Facebook, 33% ResearchGate, 32% a personal blog, 25% YouTube, 21% Google+ and 20% online referencing tools such as Mendeley or Zotero. Other social media tools such as multi-authored blogs (16%), Wikipedia as an author/editor (7%), Pinterest (9%), SlideShare (13%), Instagram (3%), Tumblr (5%), Flickr (5%), Storify (9%), curation tools (7%), Google Scholar (1%) and Quora (1%) attracted fewer responses (see Figure 4).

When asked to list any other digital tools they used as part of their academic work, 9% of respondents took the opportunity to mention a wide range of others. These included Evernote, Prezi, Google Docs, Dropbox, SurveyMonkey, Vimeo, Vine, Citeulike, Klout, Refworks, Diigo, online forums, Skype, Google Drive, Eventbrite, wikis, Doodle, podcasts, Yammer, RSS feedreader, FigShare, Reddit, Netvibes, Foursquare, Weebly

websites, listservs, Google NGram, Stack Overflow, other websites not specified, others' blogs, Wikimedia Commons, Plurk, online learning tools such as Moodle, Blackboard and Wimba, email, Second Life, Buffer, Canvas, github, Wikispaces, Google Alerts, Voice Thread, Rebelmouse, Flipsnack, Pro Teacher, About.me, XING, GoTo meeting, Pubmed and Endnote.

As Figure 5 shows, in response to the question about which of these social media the respondents found *most useful* for their academic work, Twitter again featured very strongly (83%), followed by a very long margin by Academia.edu (23%), a personal blog (16%), Facebook (14%), LinkedIn (14%), online referencing tools (11%),YouTube (10%), a multi-authored blog (7%), Google+ (5%), SlideShare (5%) and curation tools (4%). Other tools listed (Wikipedia as an author/editor, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr and Quora) attracted less than 2% of responses. Respondents were again given the opportunity to write in other tools that they found the most useful for their academic work and 5% did so, listing the following: podcasts, Stack Overflow, Prezi, Evernote, online forums, Dropbox, Skype, Netvibes, Pubmed, Pinboard, Google Docs, Google Alerts, github, Citeulike, Weebly websites, listservs, others' blogs, Wikimedia Commons, Plurk, Yammer, email, stack exchange, Zite, About Me and wikis.

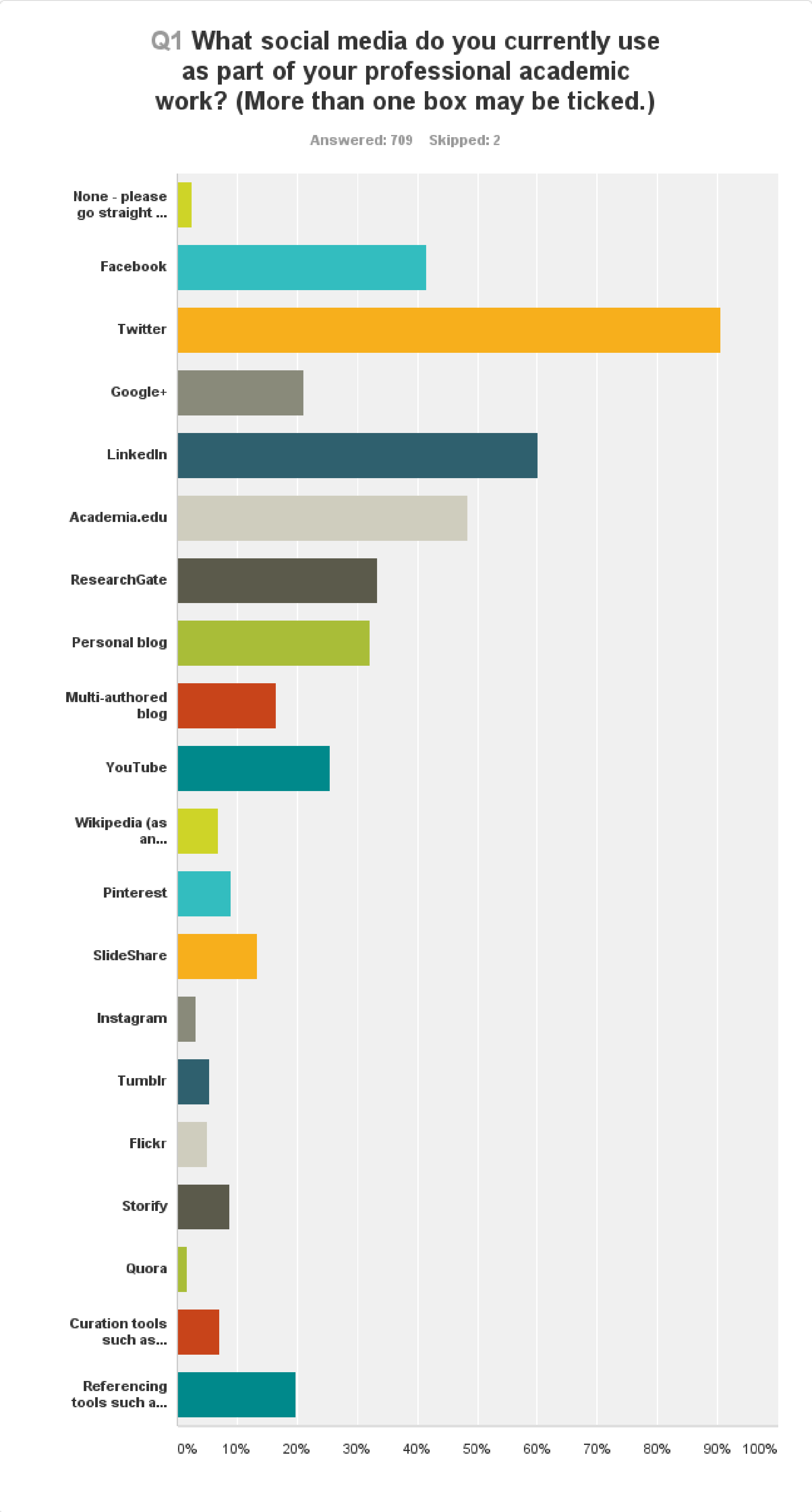
Benefits of social media use

Making connections and developing networks

As has been found in previous research, for the majority of respondents, the principal benefit they gained from using social media was related to the connections or networks they had established with other academics, students and also those outside academia. Frequent reference was made to the wide scope of these connections, which allowed people to interact with others across the globe and from diverse communities. Many respondents referred to the opportunity their social media use gave them to connect to other academics in other countries or in other academic disciplines as well as their own and have stimulating conversations or eliciting feedback on their research online:

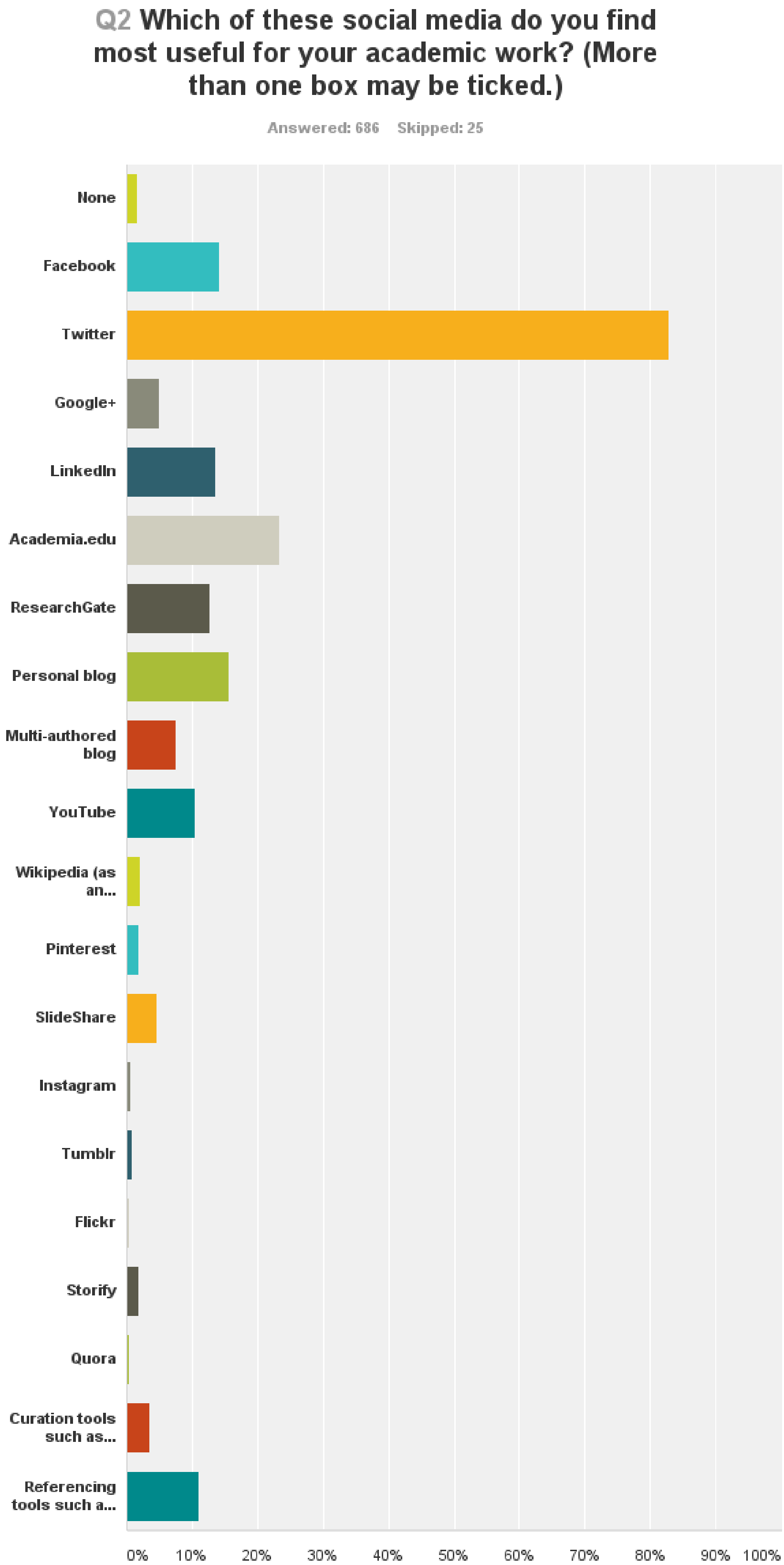
> 'The rapid accessibility to a vast and professionally meaningful network.'
>
> 'Feeling better connected to other academics.'
>
> 'Twitter hashtags mean we can create our own conversations/influence more directly than Facebook.'
>
> 'I use Facebook to keep in touch with friends and profs from graduate school. I have found a rich and wonderful academic network on Twitter.'

Figure 4



Q1 What social media do you currently use as part of your professional academic work? (More than one box may be ticked.)
Answered: 709 Skipped: 2
None - please go straight ...
Facebook
Twitter
Google+
LinkedIn
Academia.edu
ResearchGate
Personal blog
Multi-authored blog
YouTube
Wikipedia (as an...
Pinterest
SlideShare
Instagram
Tumblr
Flickr
Storify
Quora
Curation tools such as...
Referencing tools such a...
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

Figure 5



Q2 Which of these social media do you find most useful for your academic work? (More than one box may be ticked.)
Answered: 686 Skipped: 25
None
Facebook
Twitter
Google+
LinkedIn
Academia.edu
ResearchGate
Personal blog
Multi-authored blog
YouTube
Wikipedia (as an...
Pinterest
SlideShare
Instagram
Tumblr
Flickr
Storify
Quora
Curation tools such as...
Referencing tools such a...
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

> 'Love the ability to chat to colleagues on Twitter, better than seeing each other just once a year at conferences and actually I have "met" people on Twitter before meeting them IRL at conference.'

> 'My focus is science outreach to general audiences. These formats [Facebook, Twitter, Storify] are easy to use and my audiences are there. It helps me disseminate information about science, science news and the process of science to broader audiences.'

> 'Twitter allows me to make connections to folks that I would not otherwise have - journalists, policy professionals.'

It was common for the respondents to also note that their social media use enabled them to make connections with people or groups that they otherwise may never have come across. Social media networks were expanded in unpredictable directions and serendipitous ways. A British female early career academic noted, for example:

> 'I discover interesting articles or events that I wouldn't necessarily have otherwise. It's an easy way to see what's happening around the world. Also, it's good for making informal links with other researchers by following them and commenting on their tweets. I have discovered researchers through Twitter who share similar interests that I wouldn't necessarily have otherwise.'

Others' comments included:

> 'Enables connections with a much great diversity of people who wouldn't normally come to my attention.'

> 'Come across ideas would normally not encounter.'

> 'Links to papers and articles that would not be on my radar normally.'

> 'My reading has broadened enormously as I see more links posted by people I follow.'

> 'I've made contact with people I wouldn't otherwise have met via Twitter.'

Some respondents observed that not only were their social media networks broad, they were also horizontal and democratic, enabling more junior academics and postgraduate students to more easily interact with senior academics. As a British female early career academic wrote:

> 'I like Twitter especially because it allows me to follow a lot of people doing similar (or even better: not so similar) research as I do and keep track of what they're working on/publication/struggles they're having. What's particularly great is that these people come from all levels of research (other students to senior academics) and all over the world.'

Some other comments on this aspect included:

> 'Breaking down of junior/senior barriers – more level interaction.'

> 'Being able to interact with other academics in a non-hierarchical way.'

> 'It is a very flat structure. I find it extraordinary to experience just how much access you can get to public figures and eminent academics active on the channel [Twitter].'

> 'My department uses social media to build community between students, graduate students and professors.'

Openness and sharing

The respondents commented on the virtues of openness and sharing that they considered as benefits of using social media:

> 'I find Academia.edu useful for finding and sharing work openly that might not be available otherwise.'

> 'I like the daily jewels of unexpected journal articles and blog posts that my friends post.'

> 'Although I don't tweet myself, I feel like I learn listening to the conversation. It's also helpful to read the many articles people link and share.'

The opportunity to reach individuals and groups outside the university was particularly valued as part of this ethos of openness and sharing:

> 'Twitter has the largest range of academics and interested people. It allows our work to reach a wider audience than published output or conferences. Helps remove barriers to academic work to the public.'

> 'Easier access to potential non-academic partners and stakeholders in research.'

Self-promotion

Many respondents mentioned the opportunities for promoting their own research and discussing their ideas in early form with colleagues. A British male mid-career academic described his strategy thus:

> 'The habit I have developed over the last year or so is to deposit green open access versions of my papers in my employing university's digital repository, write a surrounding blog post with an embedded link, and publicise the lot using Twitter. In this way I seek to engage with a wide audience, and encourage people (in and out of academia and practice) to read my research. I also use my blog more generally to comment on happenings in my field.'

Other comments included:

> 'Dissemination of my work to worldwide readers.'

> 'Twitter is a good way to promote any papers you may have had published.'

> 'I advertise recent publications and other accomplishments via social media.'

> 'I hope to lure people to my new website (and vice versa) to raise my profile and help my post doc employability.'

> 'I find that blogging/Facebook can be a very good way to make one's research more widely known to other scientists, the public and, very importantly, students (both to inform them and to recruit!).'

> 'Frankly, much of it is self-promotional: it lets people know what I'm doing, and it helps build/maintain a small profile.'

> 'I'm a junior scholar, and Academia.edu and LinkedIn provide some exposure. I'm fairly sure that having my publications readily accessible on Academia.edu has increased my citations.'

> 'I find it a great way to extend the dissemination of my research results and engage with others in public policy debates beyond just the academic community. Twitter allows me to drive traffic to my blog and my blog allows me to discuss and explore policy issues beyond those that would result in a journal article or book.'

> 'Offers a repository that is not linked to my employer, therefore easily transportable. Provides evidence of impact and raises profile. Dissemination of work.'

Research

For several respondents, social media engagement allowed them to keep them in touch with new developments and events and provide access to unpublished and new articles in their field of research:

> 'Keeps me up to date with what people are thinking/doing much more efficiently than before.'
>
> 'Access to relevant blogs, news articles, research papers, etc, that I may have missed. I have developed very useful collaborative links through Twitter.'
>
> 'Identifying new technologies and hypotheses.'
>
> 'Keeps me abreast of yet unpublished work.'
>
> 'Academia.edu is great for getting digital access to articles posted by their authors, and for keeping up to date with colleagues' publications.'

The respondents said that they also valued the speed and immediacy of social media, including being able to chat with others in their networks in real time about issues of mutual interest. Twitter was particularly valued by these respondents because of its speed and responsiveness and its use in following conferences:

> 'I like the fast pace of Twitter.'
>
> 'Instant response.'
>
> 'Being ahead of the curve for new ideas in my field.'
>
> 'Very quick dissemination and responses; informal nature permits early mooting of ideas.'
>
> 'Instantaneous nature. Blog allows me to craft ideas & receive feedback, often receive timely notification of important events and publications.'
>
> 'Twitter – quick scans for info. Minimal time wastage.'
>
> 'Twitter is a wonderful tool to stay connected to your discipline's "breaking news."'
>
> 'Twitter is an amazing forum at conferences. For those attending, it allows conversation, and for those unable to attend, it provides a glimpse inside. I love the back channel.'

Some respondents were using social media tools specifically for research purposes, including recruiting participants for their projects:

> 'I am actually tracking an international movement and so following key players on Twitter has been useful in terms of getting leads, reaching new informants, etc. I also have a network of colleagues on Facebook who suggest citations, theoretical frameworks, etc.'

> 'I use social media to disseminate work, background ethnographic work e.g. observing interactions, language and knowledge of certain social groups.'

> 'My work is mostly in alternative art. These are easy ways for participants to document/share their work with me.'

> 'I have used Facebook to recruit study participants.'

> 'My PhD project is participatory action, so it's firstly a record/information purpose. However it's also open to public because that's easier to access and I'm also looking at broader discourse (public can make comments).'

Several respondents commented on the value of social media and other digital tools for organising their work and increasing their efficiency. A British female mid-career academic, for example, went into some detail to explain her own use:

> 'Netvibes - this is my radar, I keep all the journals/magazines blogs and other research resources that I follow here. If a resource page cannot be added to my Netvibes then it's not on my radar. Delicious - I collect the links to relevant papers and other web-based resources here Evernote - I collect my reading notes, ideas/hypothesis for research questions, and meeting notes here. I can share all my notes with relevant others (e.g. my reading notes with my PhD students, etc.) Dropbox - I use this to store and share materials (drafts of papers, datasets, etc.) with my research collaborators, most of whom are distributed all over the world. Skype - this is my primary medium for synchronous collaboration with others (I don't use phone).'

Reponses from others included:

> 'Organising my academic work.'

> 'Referencing: would be lost without referencing tools such as Mendeley or Zotero.'

> 'I find most useful the ease with which I can integrate Mendeley with my daily work and then share it through Academia.edu.'

> 'Pinboard and Zotero are essential for keeping tracking of my references and materials … Twitter and Pinboard are linked so that if I "favorite" a tweet with a URL, the URL is added to my "unread" queue on Pinboard. When I have downtime and am randomly surfing the web (often from my phone), I usually pick something from this queue.'

Teaching

Some respondents mentioned using social media in their teaching. They remarked that social media offered avenues to engage their students and a way in which online students in particular can easily connect with academic staff and each other:

> 'Students see communities' responses/engagement. It's brilliant for online students to connect with global classroom.'

> 'Students are able to engage with material in real time when I use Twitter in my classroom.'

> 'The ability to share sources with my students.'

> 'Fast effective way to communicate with students.'

> 'Increases engagement and interaction in large cohort teaching.'

> 'Easy way to give information to students that is not 100% course delivered.'

> 'Another way to engage with students in and out of the class room.'

> 'I use YouTube to find relevant videos for the courses I teach. Most of my courses are online-only and asynchronous, and I've found that adding external videos (not created by me) helps the students.'

> 'Facebook pages are set up for students/staff to share posts of academic interest. This helps some students to engage in broader discussions about health and health inequalities.'

Support

Several postgraduate students and early career researchers wrote that social media connections often gave them emotional as well as academic support, which they found particularly important at their stage of academic career. As commented by an American female early career academic:

> 'I find social media to be a valuable tool for networking, information seeking, and support. I am rather isolated in my department (only person researching and/or digital media) so social media is an outlet for me to find support, networks, and up-to-date information that I don't otherwise have at my institution. It also helps to foster relationships and connections I make at conferences.'

Some other responses related to support included:

> 'Supporting others and being supported in turn.'

> 'I do a part-time PhD. I do not get to meet my peers or supervisor that often. Twitter is a great help – it makes me feel connected with current debates etc. Sometimes it is the only contact I have with my closest peers on the same course!'

> 'I am rather isolated in my department (only person researching and/or digital media) so social media is an outlet for me to find support, networks, and up-to-date information that I don't otherwise have at my institution.'

Concerns about social media use

Privacy and the blurring of boundaries

As was evident in previous research, the most commonly raised concern for the respondents was that of privacy, and related to this, the blurring of boundaries between an individual's private life and her professional persona that takes place on social media. Respondents observed that it can be difficult to delimit and maintain these boundaries. This concerned some people because they thought that their academic persona may be undermined by personal content on social media: 'Some caution is required – I feel as there is the potential for some academics to disclose too much of their professional and personal lives' (British female early career academic). A male early career academic (region not disclosed) noted that using social media was fraught with difficulties for him as he is transgender but has not disclosed this to others:

> 'That makes social media in general difficult for me. And it is increasingly making being an academic hugely difficult for me - when so much information/opportunities etc. are only available via social media and when institutions are increasingly forcing social media take-up upon staff it makes life in my position very difficult. It's an issue I grapple with daily.'

Other comments on this issue included:

> 'I worry about infringement on academic freedom and about what happens when my personal and professional life are documented in one Twitter feed.'

> 'I find the line between self-promotion, personal interests and professional work very hard to define, to the extent that I choose to not engage on Twitter.'

> 'I keep my social media-presence semi-anonymous (I don't have any pictures of myself), as I've had some bad experiences with that.'

> 'Sometimes think where the line is between professional and personal. I don't want to put too much in the public domain about my personal life but don't want to be fully work focussed as that isn't very interesting for me.'

> 'Some caution is required I feel as there is the potential for some academics to disclose too much of their professional and personal lives.'

Some academics pointed out that they needed to be careful about whom they 'friended' or followed on social media and to be aware in turn of whom was following them. This is what an American female mid-career academic had to say about this issue:

> 'I have to be careful not to tweet or post about my bad days (usually students' fault) because many of them follow me on Twitter. I am thinking about creating a personal account and a professional/professorial account to alleviate the problem, But I'm not sure that would absolve me of responsibility if I did tweet something inappropriate from a personal account rather than from a professional account. In the Twitterverse, it all seems to be the same.'

She went on to make some comments about Facebook:

> 'I am also on Facebook. I will accept friend requests from students, but I will not request their Facebook friendship. That would be really weird, as if I were knocking at a fraternity house door and asking to come to their party. As soon as I allow them to subscribe to my feed, I restrict what they can see of my personal life. The connection is there and they can reach me if necessary, often at all times of day or night, but I do not feel that I have crossed any ethical boundaries. I do not use Facebook to disseminate class information. I am always professional but not professorial. In many ways this creates a one-way glass that enables me to support their accomplishments and disappointments without burdening them with my ups and downs. Rather than being unfair or voyeuristic, I feel this is an extension of my advisory role.'

Other people's comments included:

> 'On Facebook I do not care to know too much about my students' personal lives.'

> 'I don't let most patients "friend" me on Facebook. That's for friends and family and may not always be professional.'

> 'I am conscious that my research participants could easily find me so make sure not to be too critical of the organisations they work for or to say anything that could damage my credibility.'

> 'I have experienced some negativity from research participants who have looked me up online and come to the conclusion that I have a particular outlook/ stance about something which they have taken offence with.'

In negotiating this issue, many people mentioned using some platforms for professional purposes only and maintaining others for private or personal use (as outlined by one of the academics used for the 'snapshots' section). As an Australian female early career academic put it:

> 'I use Facebook, Flickr, Pinterest and a personal blog for personal rather than academic purposes. [I] don't want to let my professional identity enter those spaces because I like having work/life separation to at least some extent.'

The risk of jeopardising one's career

Significant concern about jeopardising their academic career or future job prospects was evident in the comments written by respondents who were early career researchers or postgraduate students, and to a lesser extent, some more senior academics in my online survey. A British female postgraduate student noted that being too open in the content she shares on social media may make her vulnerable: 'My Twitter mixes personal with academic online activity. I worry that my (left) politics and my openness about being queer may disadvantage me in getting jobs.' A British male mid-career academic wrote that he was worried that 'sometimes forthright expression of views could cause issues for employers and affect my reputation. Use has to carefully balance professionalism and discretion with academic freedom and freedom of speech.' An Australian male early career academic noted that: 'Yes, I am concerned about overexposure that could damage my career (I'm early career). I am very cautious about the posts I make public.' An Australian female early career academic said: 'I worry that universities will crack down on academic freedom in this space. I have already left one institution for this reason. Despite making every effort to be part of the policy development process, I felt there was a moral panic motivating this work and left.'

Others' comments on this topic included:

> 'I am concerned that if I post something that is considered counter to the narrative my work place would take; or if I post something personal; or if I otherwise come across as unprofessional - these things could result in repercussions. Social media can make previously small conversations public.'

> 'Saying something/endorsing something that may affect my future job prospects (I am very cautious about this and probably give less of my opinion than I'd like to).'

> 'Yes, sometimes forthright expression of views could cause issues for employers and affect my reputation (+ve/-vely). Use has to carefully balance professionalism and discretion with academic freedom and freedom of speech.'

> 'I never, ever post anything particularly personal, because it's impossible to know how that will be interpreted by search committees.'

> 'I do self-censor on Twitter and wouldn't post anything I wouldn't want my employer to read. On Facebook I have more personal stuff, but still nothing that would be career-damaging.'

> 'I worry about everything I post for fear that it will be used against me. Thus, I triple check everything I type before posting.'

Several respondents from the USA specifically referred to the example of Kansas University, involving the suspension of an academic for a comment he made on social media and the subsequent development of a social media policy by senior administrators responsible for governing the state universities in Kansas[2]. (In response to whether they had any concerns or worries about using social media, one respondent simply replied 'Kansas!') Although only a few people mentioned this issue directly, there was evidence of unease among some academics in the USA about the implications of using social media for their employment. An American female postgraduate student put it this way:

> '[I worry] that my university will fire me due to some public post, even though on "public" social media I am very careful/ self-censored (like Twitter) and on my more "private" channels I use a pseudonym (like Tumblr). But I'm still nervous. All universities seem to be making some very questionable decisions and actions against their faculty.'

Lack of credibility

Another issue identified by respondents in my online survey was the lack of credibility that using social media for academic purposes was given by other academics, who viewed such practices as frivolous or time-wasting, or as a female postgraduate student

[2] In December 2013 the Board of Regents responsible for overseeing state universities in Kansas adopted a policy that allowed senior administrators of those universities to discipline, suspend or sack academic staff who were considered to use social media inappropriately. This policy was adopted in response to the University of Kansas case in which a journalism professor was suspended for a tweet criticising the National Rifle Association (Jaschick 2013).

from Canada put it, 'being seen by old/stodgy/traditional researchers as not being serious.'

Other responses included:

> 'Fear of being ridiculed for supposedly adopting methods/lifestyle of students.'
>
> 'Frowned upon by more experienced colleagues as frivolous or dangerous.'
>
> 'Some academics are very negative/disparaging & don't get the potential.'

Quality of content posted

Concern about the quality of their posts was evident in the responses written by some respondents in my survey. One respondent wrote that she was concerned about 'coming across as dumb!' (European female postgraduate student), while another mentioned the risk of 'putting a half-baked idea on the public record' (Australian female mid-career academic). A third respondent wrote that 'I occasionally worry that having many "works in progress" sitting around on the internet may provoke a negative reaction if people judge them by the same standards as, say, journal articles' (British male postgraduate student).

Other comments included:

> 'I worry about things being taken out of context. The character limit on Twitter is very restrictive, so you have to be careful with abbreviations, etc.'
>
> 'I think it can dumb-down research findings.'
>
> 'Find I can get emotionally engaged - that's not a bad thing but have lost my temper once or twice. There's a lot of ethics issues in having a blog, it gives you a public voice which may be more authoritative than your critics or commenters. Have to be aware of this.'
>
> 'I am concerned about putting yourself "out there" - that you may say something that comes back to haunt you.'
>
> 'I blog ideas that aren't fully fleshed out and I don't want those ideas necessarily quoted or attributed to me.'

Time pressures

While, as noted earlier in this report, many respondents reported that using social media tools and platforms had many benefits (including, for some, higher efficiency and better organisation of their work), use also contributed to time pressures. Several

respondents made reference to the 'time-drain' of using social media or of the importance of not becoming 'addicted' to using them to the detriment of other work. Once an individual starts using these tools and platforms, it can be difficult to switch off.

Comments on these issues included:

> 'Very easy to become distracted and go off at a tangent (perhaps not always a negative though).'
>
> 'Difficult to prioritise activities and understand how much time/effort needs to be invested.'
>
> 'I am quite a social media enthusiast but I am concerned about the amount of time that it is possible to waste on it. I am also concerned about the proliferation of sites, which is why I stick to a few.'
>
> 'More time spent on work so adversely affects work life balance.'
>
> 'Risk of using up too much time, maintaining boundaries. Especially as (definable) "outputs" (an organisational obsession) can be hard to define.'
>
> 'Can be time-consuming, even if useful; feeling like have to always stay on top of posts and updates to remain visible and up to date on what others are doing.'

Social media use becoming an obligation

Related to the problem of time pressure is the concern that academics may become obliged to use social media as yet another dimension of their work. Several people remarked that universities may be adding digital public engagement to the already long list of tasks demanded of their academic staff. As a male early career academic from Canada wrote: 'My concern is that it is time consuming and it is yet another PR job downloaded into faculty already stretched beyond reason.' A European male early career researcher commented that social media 'shouldn't be considered an obligation. It may contribute to the "the publish or perish" tyranny', while an Australian female early career researcher noted: 'social media is highly useful but I think it is important to question the neoliberal logic that drives this kind of activity and the impact upon the academic labour market.' A similar comment was made by a male European early career academic, who said: 'We are the perfect neoliberal subjects, eager to take on more work (i.e. work about work) to succeed. We have simply internalized labor and social media propel that predatory, self-inflicted affliction.'

Several people commented on the lack of institutional reward for using social media even as one's university might expect one to do it. As a British male postgraduate student noted:

> 'So, as far as I'm aware, there is little-no incentive structure behind using social media for scientific outreach. Organisations like the RCUK say that using it is good, but don't offer a "carrot" to actually persuade academics to use it. This is fine for some academics who do sci comm via social media viewing it as a worthwhile activity, or fun (yay!), but I imagine this isn't enough for many. I mean, you still have to do research, and while the culture is still "publish or perish", doing extraneous non-research activities, when often timetables are crammed full already, engaging with various social media can be considered a less important activity. So yeah, there needs to be some kind of cultural shift in which the benefits, both personally and on a broader level, are known and recognised, and maybe even rewarded in some way (counting towards jobs, promotion, grants etc).'

Becoming a target

Several respondents identified their worry about being open to attack by using social media. Such attacks may descend into outright aggression, hate speech or harassment. Thus, for example, an Asian female mid-career academic noted that: '[social media] can be a nasty unmediated space. If something goes wrong, unlikely upper management of Uni will support you. Trolling. Ick place if your work is non-normative: e.g. feminist, queer.' A British female mid-career academic commented that 'I've had problems with trolls that have been quite disturbing,' while a senior female academic, also British, said 'I sometimes worry about abusive comments on blog posts that deal with controversial topics.' A male early career academic from Australia/New Zealand wrote that: 'Visibility is an issue; there is always a concern about trolling and/or tweets posted appearing out of context in mainstream media.'

Other responses on this topic included:

> 'As a woman online, my concerns mostly revolve around trolls and abusive comments, both of which I have had to deal with. I have learned you have to be quick in shutting both of these down.'

> '[I worry about] things I say on social media being misappropriated. Being targeted by nuisance-causers - the ones who use social media as a platform for flaming other users or being unnecessarily provocative / offensive.'

> 'Twitter is a very public forum, one can run into hostility from non-academics.'

> 'I work with controversial subject matter - the brevity of Twitter can lead to misunderstandings; angry responses can take on an uncontrollable dynamic.'

Too much self-promotion by others

While, as observed earlier in this report, many respondents were open and positive about using social media for self-promotion, a small number of respondents commented negatively about this use, particularly by some individuals:

> 'I am concerned that some use Twitter to inflate their egos and for self-publicity, rather than a sharing of knowledge.'

> 'I find the whole concept [of using social media] to be nothing more than a platform for ruthless self-publicity. Many of the most senior academics form social media cliques where they all follow and RT each other. I find this excludes more junior colleagues and their work.'

> 'Narcissistic people tend to have the most followers and be the thought leaders online when this may not be true in the offline world.'

> 'I'm worried about being perceived as self-promoting, and about having to oversimplify and over-"market" my messages.'

Plagiarism

Some academics who use social media are struggling with evaluating whether their ideas may be plagiarised by expressing them on social media rather than in traditional academic publication outlets. As a British female early career academic mused: 'how much can/should you share of your research via social media before it's published, and who, if anyone, cites pre-article material (and how?).' A British male early career researcher commented that he was worried that '[m]y ideas could be "ripped off" – some colleagues have had their work used in the media w/o attribution.'

The commercialisation of content and copyright issues

A small number of respondents commented on the ways in which online empires were benefiting from the content uploaded by users, including themselves. They were critical of this. Others were concerned about copyright issues when loading content to platforms such as Academia.edu:

> '[I have] concerns about copyrights and Acadmia.edu; the same concerns about using it for personal reasons, namely companies gathering and tracking my personal information.'

> 'Concerns regarding the intellectual property position of posting work online.'

> 'My chief concerns have to do with the corporate ownership of the social media tools I use. Many of the sites I find most useful, such as Twitter, have problematic corporate leadership that I don't trust and I worry about the long tail of corporatization.'

> 'Using third-party, for-profit platforms raises issues of data management, privacy, access to information, data loss.'

> 'I worry that Academia.edu benefits from collecting data and making money from all of us who participate at a time when other venues (eg academic publishing, to say nothing of professor positions) are in decline.'

> 'I am worried about posting my research due to copyright. I heard one press is cracking down on Academia.edu.'

Discussion and concluding comments

The findings of the survey suggest that those academics that are using social media are doing so often in complex and sophisticated ways, creating a social media 'ecosystem' in which they have learnt to work with and exploit the affordances of a variety of tools and platforms. Using social media tools and platforms can offer many benefits for academics, as the survey findings demonstrate. The opportunity to establish global networks with a wide range of academics and people outside academia, promote a diversity of relationships that otherwise would not have been achieved, achieve horizontal connections including academics at all levels of seniority, and discover serendipitous connections from outside one's usual networks were greatly valued by many respondents. The ability to share material with diverse groups was also valued, as were various uses for research and teaching. Twitter, in particular, was viewed as useful for such purposes because it was global, immediate, responsive, provided a continuous stream of relevant links, gave people the opportunity to publicise their blogs and publications and allowed people to follow conferences and curate interest groups using hashtags strategically.

Several scholars discussing academic blogging have asserted that using this medium often serves the purpose of sharing information and providing advice as part of a gift economy of producing material to share freely with others. From this perspective scholarship and knowledge are not viewed as a marketable commodity but rather as a social good (Adema 2013, Gregg 2006, Hall 2013a, 2013b, Mewburn and Thomson 2013, Veletsianos 2013). This approach to using social media was evident in the survey responses in relation to a range of tools and platforms. Here the general sharing ethos and participatory democracy (Beer and Burrows 2010, Ford *et al.* 2013, John 2013) that are viewed as characteristic of social media engagement more generally are interpreted in a more specialist academic context. More attention needs to be directed to identifying the pleasures that academics gain from using social media for their work. Using digital media for academic work can involve playfulness and creativity (Löfgren 2014, Veletsianos 2013, Vostal 2014) as well as appreciating the generosity of participating in the gift economy of social media, but this is rarely acknowledged in academic research.

It is important, however, to maintain a critical stance on social media use and to realise the consequences and implications of their use. The benefits of academic social media use are clear, but so are the potential pitfalls and risks. Using digital technologies

in higher education is complex enterprise involving ambivalences and negotiations. The survey found that a measure of caution was involved for even for those academics who were enthusiastic and skilful users of social media. The openness and opportunities for engagement that from one perspective are some of the most valuable attributes of social media can also be the most challenging elements of their use. It is here that issues about maintaining the boundaries between one's personal and professional personae (or choosing to blur these boundaries), what content one should post, which tools and platforms should be used for which purposes, how one should respond to others, how to deal with negative responses, considering the career implications of uploaded content, copyright issues and worrying about others plagiarising one's ideas are to the fore.

Academics who are using social media are required to weigh up and balance a number of competing desires, demands and objectives: to facilitate their own research and connections without jeopardising their status or employment; to create content that is interesting and publicises their research without appearing overly entrepreneurial or self-aggrandising; to regularly engage with others and achieve freedom of expression on an informal basis while being aware of not inflaming sensitivities or appearing unprofessional by providing too much personal detail; to share their ideas openly while ensuring they meet academic standards; coming to terms with loss of control over the circulation of material; or to achieve work efficiency while not allowing too much precious time to be consumed (Veletsianos 2013 discusses many of these issues in his auto-ethnography of digital scholarship). Academics must achieve this balance in a context in which the social media tools and platforms they use are promoting the ethos of freedom of expression and sharing simultaneously with profiting from the data that are generated by users as part of the digital knowledge economy (Ford *et al.* 2013, Fuchs 2011, Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010).

Academics are negotiating social media use in a context in which many feel that there are increasing time pressures in their work. The audit and excellence discourses in higher education and the proliferation of performance, 'quality' and 'quantity' measures that assess the value as well as their number of academic outputs (Burrows 2012, Gill 2010, Kelly and Burrows 2011, Vostal 2014) have contributed to these pressures. As was evident from the survey responses, social media use both contributes to speed of communication and networking in academia and draws time away from other academic pursuits. While social media use facilitates connection and sharing of material and thus contributes to older-style ideals of scholarly community and exchange of ideas, its speed and rapid churn of ideas and its use by some individuals and universities for self-promotion contributes to the increased competitiveness and striving for 'impact' that characterise contemporary academia.

Some commentators have argued that social media use may transform the very nature of academic writing, scholarship and identity (Graham 2013, Kirkup 2010, Kitchin 2014, Löfgren 2014, Veletsianos 2013, Veletsianos and Kimmons 2013, Weller 2011). My survey was deliberately designed and promoted to elicit responses from academics who were already using social media. What of those academics who are

ignoring or resisting the use of social media, or have tried these tools but decided not to continue, or those who have been badly affected by negative reactions to their social media presence and discontinued use? Which groups within academia have most to lose from their use or non-use of these technologies and may be marginalised by the increasing digitisation of higher education? How are the 'politics of circulation' (Beer 2013a, 2013b) affecting academic content creators on social media?

Fransman (2013) notes that research into academics' use of social and other digital media needs to consider four conceptual levels: that of the individual's use as part of that person's biography (characterised by 'digital identities' and 'digital skills'); that of groups ('digital networks' or 'digital communities' of academics); in institutions (the 'digital university'); and the material resources themselves ('digital devices' and their affordances). One might add to these levels that of the wider social context beyond the academy in which academics use (or do not use) social and other digital media and in which academic networks and universities are sited. This would involve mapping how academic social media engagement is undertaken, how it might be changing in response to other developments in higher education and the broader politics of the practice. How are academics' social media practices at work integrated with those outside the workplace context? What wider social influences are playing a role in the configuration of digitised academic communities and digitised universities? What are the underlying assumptions about academic work and productivity that give meaning to current understandings of using social media for academia?

As several commentators have pointed out (and as some of the survey respondents observed), the managerial and neoliberal political environment in which academics are using (or not using) social media and other digital tools needs to be acknowledged (Burrows 2012, Gill 2010, Kelly and Burrows 2011, Lupton in press, Selwyn 2014, Smith and Jeffery 2013, Weller 2013, Vostal 2014). In a context of what Selwyn (2014: 3) refers to as 'hype, hope and fear' in relation to discourses on digital technologies in higher education, the withdrawal of government funding for teaching and research in many countries in favour of a market economy, difficulties that many junior academics face in securing stable employment and job losses among more established academics (Holmwood 2010, Marginson 2009, Peters 2013, Veletsianos 2013, Vostal 2014) are realities that require attention in discussions of digitising academia. Even more broadly, questions of the digital data and knowledge economy and the commodification of social media content have barely been touched upon in relation to academics' use of these platforms and tools.

Going beyond surveys and using qualitative research to produce thick descriptions of use is called for in future studies. This kind of research would be invaluable in investigating the contribution of social media to the 'making up' of academic selves, or how academics manage their online interactions and identities. To take a sociomaterial perspective (an approach that hitherto has been lacking in research on this topic), investigating the entanglements and assemblages that are enacted when academics bodies/identities interact with each other and with digital technologies would be a step towards further insights. Such an approach would highlight not only the

agencies of the human actors involved (academics and their publics) but also the role of the nonhuman actors (the higher education system, the digital data economy, algorithmic authority, the digital software and hardware) that are involved in producing digitised academic assemblages.

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